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SOCIO-CULTURAL MOBILITY ISSUES IN CANADA*

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ABSTRACT:

A review of the major studies on social mobility in Canada, from Porter's Vertical Mosaic to the Canadian Mobility Study of 1983, is presented. The implications of the occupational distributions by ethnic classes observed at the 1981 and 1986 censuses are discussed. It is seen that while all ethnic classes have done well in mobility terms, the Natives of Canada have been left behind.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every society is characterized by an unequal distribution of benefits and privileges to its members occupying different social positions. Modern societies have developed various institutions and other devices to minimize the expolitation of one class of people by another. And Canada is no exception to this. We have seen various legislations both at the Federal and the Provincial levels in this regard. Sociologists study the phenomenon of differential access to benefits and privileges as the social stratification process. Related to and to a major extent influenced by this process, individuals or groups of individuals, shift or move from one social position/status to another. Social mobility is a complex phenomenon and its underlying mechanisms differ from one society to another.

Social mobility is intrinsically multi-dimensional in nature. Mobility in the social scale (vertical mobility as it is sometimes called) and mobility in geographical space (or horizontal mobility) are interrelated. In other words, migration and occupational mobility are two of the dimensions of social mobility. Income is another dimension to be reckoned. We know that Alberta attracted a lot of migrants in the seventies and most of them came here to make money and rise high in the income scale. When Alberta went bust, Ontario became the

destination of the migrants. Shifts in income are important to be studied and these are dependent on many things. Many of the earlier studies on social mobility (e.g. Rogoff, 1953; Glass, 1954) had confined themselves to occupational changes or shifts only. The rationale behind this approach is that social mobility can be satisfactorily approximated by occupational mobiltiy. Blau and Duncan's (1967) study of the American occupational structure is a pioneering piece of research and has influenced the studies in Canada and elsewhere.

The study of social mobility and the stratification process in a society tells us about the fluidity and the openness of the society under consideration. Studies in Canada are rather limited. John Porter's (1965) the Vertical Mosaic may be taken as the starting point of Canadian mobility studies.

Before I present a review of the earlier studies in Canadian mobility, I wish to raise some questions which need to be answered. Canada is a mosaic, both horizontally and vertically. John Porter has talked about the vertical dimension of this mosaic in his classic work and the research that followed it. For understanding the Canadian mobility situation, we have to look at: a) internal and external migration, b) changes in income levels, c) changes in occupations as an element of career and between generations, d) gender differences in the above and e) the role of ascription and achievement in status attainment. Since Canada encourages multiculturalism through its public policy, the language element also needs some consideration. Then the questions to be answered are:

1. Are Canadians occupationally and horizontally mobile? If so, what is the degree of upward mobility?
2. Are Canadians mobile with respect to income (at constant prices)?
3. Are Canadians becoming, by and large, unilingual (English speaking)?
4. Is the ability in the use of English a strong factor in social mobility?
5. Is status attainment dependent only on one's educational attainment? If not, what are the other factors influencing it?
6. Do all the cultural (ethnic) groups experience the same degree of mobility? If there are differentials, what are the factors behind them?
7. Do men and women experience the same degree of mobility and if not, what are the underlying factors behind the differential?
8. On the demographic side, how do the Canadians fare with regard to fertility and mortality?

Some of these have been partially answered in earlier studies. Even they need updating to see the extent to which the changing social and political conditions in Canada have modified the mobility patterns.

2. CANADIAN MOBILITY STUDIES

a) Migration

There are many studies on migration in and immigration into Canada (e.g. George, 1969; Kalbach, 1970; Richmond, 1970; Stone,

1969; 1978). I shall not go into them at all. But one important point to be remembered is that Canadians are quite mobile in space but fall behind the Americans. They are better than the people of the British Isles in this regard.

b) Linguistic Mobility

Richard Joy's (1972) 'Languages in Conflict' led to a plethora of studies on linguistic assimilation in and outside of Quebec. Since the sizes of population using other languages (languages other than English and French) are small, the study of assimilation/retention is only for examining whether the important characteristic of a non-French non-English cultural group remains intact or not over time. Studies show that, outside of Quebec, English will be the main language; Ottawa and Montreal will remain "bilingual". Thus Canada will look like a mosaic on "heritage days" only. The new generations of ethnic Canadians will know and speak mostly English (or French in Quebec). Linguistic assimilation into English is a foregone conclusion. This has implications for job mobility in the country.

c) Demographic Assimilation

Fertility and mortality levels in Canada are indeed low. We have moved away from low life expectancy at birth to one of very high life expectancy. Canadians live nearly 80 years now (women live longer than men). Practically all the ethnic Canadians enjoy almost the same level of life expectancy. Fertility level has moved from a high to a low level. From a level of 3+ children per woman in the baby boom years of the

1950's, we have hit the bust stage of under 2 children now. It is so low in Quebec that the Quebec society is deeply concerned about its conseqeunces. All ethnic Canadians follow the same path that the Anglos and the French have traced in regard to fertility behavior. Even the Hutterites have experienced a fertility decline as Lory Laing's (1989) and Peter's (1987) studies of this highly fertile population show. The ethnic Canadians are, in a sense, converging to the Anglo-Saxon/the French community with respect to demographic parameters. Demographic convergence is coterminuous with the social mobility factors that operate in the country. Demographic transition and social mobility are interrelated and each feeds into the other.

d) Social Mobility Studies in Canada

John Porter kindled the curiosity of social scientists by his paper on elite groups and the study of power in Canada in the November 1955 issue of the Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science. His major piece of research appeared in 1965 under the title The Vertical Mosaic, where he uses the census data on social structure and population characteristics to present a good picture of social class and power structure in Canada. Using various types of data from the census and immigration and other official statistics, Porter noted:

> "We might conclude that although there has been a transferring of workers from manual to non-manual occupations, it is questionable that all of this shift represents upward mobility from "lower level" manual occupations. It seems that these low white collar occupations have been filled more by the native labour force than by immigrants, and that the shift has provided, at best, a questionable mobility for the native-born." P. 52.

Also Porter noted that mobility deprivation in a society of industrial growth and immigration results from inadequate educational facilities. Judging from its educational systems, Canada has not been, Porter noted, a "mobility oriented society". This applied to both English and French Canada. (p. 53-54). Porter's study raised a series of questions on mobility in Canada which couldn't be adequately answered with the macro level data. Collection of micro level data was done by Porter and associates (Boyd, Goyder, Jones, McRoberts, Pineo in 1973) through the Canadian Mobility Study (CMS). The results from the CMS are reported in Ascription and Achievement: Studies in Mobility and Status Attainment in Canada by Boyd et al. (1985). We also had the educational system undergo some changes during the period Porter was writing his book. The various professional groups also rose to the occasion by passing resolutions in their registered bodies to stop recruitments from outside, when Canadians were available. When the CMS data were being collected and analysed, Krishnan and associates (Krishnan, 1975; Krishnan & Sangadasa, 1975; Madduri, 1976; Sangadasa, 1975) were using the Markov Process methodology to assess the occupational and income mobility in Canada from census and taxation data. The mathematical details of mobility modelling are available in Bartholomew (1982).

Krishnan and Sangadasa (1975) approximated the occupational mobility process by means of a finite Markov Chain. Assuming that individuals are similar, the occupational transition probabilities could be estimated from the occupational

distributions of Canadians. For the period 1951-1961, it was seen that the Canadian females had higher rates of mobility than Canadian males. For males, the greatest movement was noticed in the primary sector 33%. From the transport and communication group, 29% males moved to blue collar work. In 1951-61, on an average 17.6% of workers shifted to occupations other than they held. The female mobility was estimated as 40%. The movement out of the primary sector was small. But the movement out of service and recreation occupations was considerable (some 50%). About 20% of the white collar female workers moved down (mostly to service and recreation -- 18%).

INCOME MOBILITY:

It is estimated that during 1946-1972, the Canadians had the following annual upward mobility rates for income.

Movement rate from under

$5000 per annum income group to $5000 - 9999 -- 3%

Movement rate from $5000 - 9999 to $10000 -- 1 999 -- 2%

Movement rate from $10000 - 14,999 to $15000 - 19,999 -- 4%

Here both males and females have been combined for ease in estimation purposes. From cross-section data, for urban males, the decennial mobility rates were seen as:

From under $5000 to $5000 - 9999 ---- 36%

From $5000 - 9999 to $10,000 and above ---- 57%

Urban population seems to have experienced a higher income mobility rate.

e) Some Findings from the 1973 CMS.

The CMS was conducted in July 1973 as an addendum to the Labour Force Survey. The effective size of the sample was 45,000 - 23,000 females and 22,000 males aged 18 years and over and not full time students.

Hugh McRoberts (in Boyd et al., 1985) finds that there is more mobility than stability between generations, that there is more circulation than structural mobility, that the mobility within white-collar and blue-collar occupations is greater than the mobility between white-collar and blue-collar occupation. Jones (in Boyd et al., 1985) reaches the familiar conclusions - occupational status on entry into labour force is related to the level of schooling and the current occupational status is closely linked to occupation on entry into the labour force. It is also seen that the direct effects of origin status are limited to educational attainment. Educational attainment takes over as the main determinant of occupational status on entry into the labour force.

McRoberts presents an intergenerational father-to-son occupation outflow matrix for the native born males - See Table 1. We see that only the professional class and the upper-blue collar category seem to have a high degree of father-to-son stability (nearly 40%). All other categories seem to be very "open". A simple index of mobility is to average the sums of the off-diagonal elements and it is nearly 20%. Thus ascription seems to be weak in the Canadian context.

TABLE 1

Outflow Matrix for Father's Occupation by Son's Present Job (Native-born Males 25-64)

Father's Occupation	Son's Present Occupation 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Distribution of Father's Occupation
1. Professional & semi-pro	39.4	18.3	5.9	8.5	7.6	3.7	7.4	8.1	*	*	4.5
2. Managers	28.0	21.6	8.1	8.1	8.7	2.9	10.4	10.7	1.2	*	3.6
3. Supervisors	21.8	14.8	15.3	9.7	10.3	7.6	9.4	9.9	1.0	*	5.1
4. Upper white-collar	21.9	14.6	8.4	15.8	8.8	6.0	12.3	12.0	*	*	3.7
5. Lower white-collar	16.6	11.4	12.6	8.1	11.1	5.7	14.7	18.4	*	*	7.3
6. Foremen	13.6	11.2	8.3	8.6	8.9	13.8	17.0	16.8	1.3	*	5.8
7. Upper blue-collar	11.9	7.9	7.7	7.4	9.7	9.2	22.4	23.0	*	*	17.7
8. Lower blue-collar	8.7	6.8	7.4	5.8	8.7	7.0	21.1	32.3	*	*	24.9
9. Farmers	6.8	4.6	4.8	4.5	5.2	8.6	16.2	25.9	19.9	3.6	24.7
10. Farm workers	4.5	4.4	3.3	2.7	8.1	6.8	21.1	31.2	10.0	8.0	2.8
Total	12.8	8.7	7.5	6.8	8.2	7.8	17.5	23.5	5.8	1.5	100.0

* Cell less than 1 per cent.

Source: McRoberts in Boyd et al. Table 3:2. Degree of immobility 20%

Various other authors have analyzed the data and have contributed to an understanding of the mobility patterns in Canada. See Boyd et al. (1985) for details.

3. WHERE DO WE STAND IN THE 1980'S?

The Waterloo group (James Curtis and associates) and others have collected data on intergenerational occupational shifts and other aspects of social mobility in Canada. The data, it seems, have not been fully analysed and research reports produced.

I shall like to hazard a few conjectures here based on the 1986 and 1981 census data.

Porter (in Boyd et al., 1985) while discussing the societal context of occupational allocation in the CMS, notes that

> "a system of recruitment to occupations which showed no interference from factors of social structure would be ideal ... However, conditions of social structure intervene to become barriers for some and bridges for others in the proces of occupational attainment so that these conditions, more than competence, explain how people get to where they are" (p. 32).

Now the cultural side of the mobility story starts. Let us look at Table 2. This presents ethnic origins by socio-economic status in 1971.

We see that there is a great differential among the various ethnic groups in their occupational status, implying differential access to status. The Asian group, which consists of a wide number of subethnics, probably got recruited on the basis of the liberalized immigration policy of the late 1960's for their occupational skills/qualifications. There is little wonder that the Jewish group, known to be achievement oriented and hence well equipped for that, is well placed in the occupational ladder. A

TABLE 2

Ethnic Origins by Socioeconomic Status, Male Labour Force, 1971

Occupational level*	British	French	German	Italian	Jewish	Dutch	Polish	Scand.	Ukrainian	Other European	Asian	Native	Total
Professional	11.2	8.3	8.9	3.9	18.1	9.2	8.7	9.2	8.4	8.7	20.3	3.2	9.9
Management	7.6	5.1	5.2	2.0	12.0	5.4	4.3	5.7	4.9	3.6	3.3	2.9	5.9
Semi-professional	3.1	2.6	2.4	1.5	4.8	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.1	2.8	4.9	2.8	2.8
Skilled white collar	12.8	10.3	10.3	8.6	23.9	14.0	9.0	10.4	9.9	9.9	15.4	4.0	11.7
Skilled blue collar	19.9	21.7	24.8	28.7	9.1	23.4	23.5	23.6	20.7	24.2	12.4	20.9	21.2
Lower white collar	11.2	12.4	8.3	10.3	14.5	8.2	9.5	7.6	13.5	9.1	13.3	7.0	11.1
Semi-skilled blue collar	10.5	12.5	10.7	16.0	5.2	10.1	13.6	10.2	10.8	15.4	13.8	17.8	11.5
Labourer	17.5	21.4	15.1	26.5	11.6	15.3	19.6	15.2	17.0	19.3	14.2	32.2	18.6
Farmers	3.9	3.2	9.5	0.4	0.2	9.0	6.4	11.0	9.3	4.3	0.7	1.7	4.3
Farm labourers	2.9	2.4	5.0	1.7	0.3	6.7	3.0	4.5	3.5	2.8	1.8	7.4	3.0

Source: Porter in Boyd et al. Table 2.2.

look at these distributions reveals that all ethnic groups are not equal at all. Upper echelon occupations seem to be the monopoly of the British ethnic group. The Natives of this country are the worst hit.

The situation has changed a bit by 1981. See Table 3 for the occupational distribution in 1981. The French seem to have caught up with the British -- thanks to the silent revolution in Quebec and the rise to power of the Parti Québécois. The Native's still lag behind.

I have extracted some social data from the 1986 census of Canada to show how life is not a bed of roses to the non-Europeans and the Native people of this country. These are shown in Table 4. English is the official language for the vast majority of these people -- except for the French. The proportion of those with post secondary educational qualifications is highest for the Jewish group, followed by South Asian Indians. The Koreans and the Chinese and the Germans have greater proportions of post secondary educated than the British and the French. The Natives' share is the lowest. Look at the unemployment rates -- highest for the Natives almost one in three and lowest for the Jews and the Germans. Upper echelon jobs account for some 50% among Jews and 20% among the Charter groups. It is lowest amongst the Italians. It seems all groups are equitable in regard to these except the Jews and the Italians. The income difference is considerable -- next to the Jewish segment, the British have the highest per capita income, the Natives the lowest.

TABLE 3

Occupational Distribution of Canadian Males by Ethnicity, 1981

Ethnic Status (Single Origin)	Percent Distribution					
	British (1)	French (2)	German (3)	Italian (4)	Ukrainian (5)	Natives (6)
Occupational Category						
Managerial/Admin.	12.5	10.0	11.4	7.5	11.2	5.5
Professional	10.9	9.6	9.1	6.7	10.7	5.5
Clerical	7.3	7.5	5.1	6.7	6.7	4.1
Sales related	9.2	8.5	7.9	8.3	8.4	2.7
Service related	9.0	10.1	6.3	11.5	7.3	9.6
Farming etc.	5.4	3.8	11.4	2.0	10.1	4.1
Construction trades	10.1	10.6	13.7	19.8	11.8	20.6

Source: Computed from the 1981 Census data.

TABLE 4

Selected Social Characteristics of Canadians, 1986

Ethnicity (single origin)	British	French	Jewish	German	Italian	Ukrainian
Percent with English as official language	92.7	4.4	69.1	94.0	66.2	94.0
Percent with post secondary education	23.7	23.7	36.9	29.0	19.6	26.4
Unemployment rate	9.9	12.7	6.7	6.7	7.7	7.6
Percent holding managerial/admin. jobs among employ.	11.0	10.0	22.9	10.7	8.5	10.7
____ Professional	14.9	16.7	29.0	13.8	9.4	16.0
____ Clerical and related jobs -	18.6	18.1	17.6	15.7	17.7	18.5
____ construction trades	5.9	6.1	1.5	7.9	11.1	6.2
Av: employment income in 1985 per person in (45-54) year age group						
Full time	$27,600	$25,100	$40,100	$26,800	$34,800	$27,200
Part time	$10,400	$11,500	$16,000	$11,300	$11,500	$16,000

Table 4 cont'd.
Selected Social Characteristics (continued)

	Natives	Chinese	Korean	South Asian Indians
Percent with English as official language	84.6	75.6	75.0	86.4
Percent with post secondary education	9.0	26.9	28.6	30.8
Unemployment rate	31.1	8.2	7.1	11.9
Percent holding managerial/admin. jobs among employ.	6.3	10.4	14.3	9.4
_____ Professional	15.0	18.1	14.3	17.9
_____ Clerical and related jobs -	12.5	18.1	21.4	18.8
Av: employment income in 1985 per person in (45-54) year age group				
Full time	$20,800	$24,000	$22,700	$26,600
Part time	$ 7,600	$10,000	$10,500	$10,700

(Source: Computed from the 1986 Census data).

From these data, one can surmise that Canadians are socially upwardly mobile. Of course, some groups seem to experience higher rates of mobility for various reasons. The society has become more dynamic and more "open" compared to the time when Porter wrote his first essay on elites in Canada.

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